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As Last Combat Brigade Leaves Iraq, Arcuri Stresses Commitment to Returning Veterans

Bills Endorsed by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America Would Ensure Veterans Access to a College Education, Opportunity for a Good Job and Best Possible Medical Care

UTICA, NY-Today, U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24), joined by members of his Veterans' Advisory Committee at the Utica Veteran's Outreach Center, stressed his commitment to our returning veterans and highlighted legislation he will cosponsor as soon as the 2010 legislative session resumes next week that will ensure they have the best possible medical care, access to a college education and the opportunity for a good job.

Arcuri recently signed a pledge to stand with the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) by supporting *the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 (H.R. 5933)*, *the Veterans Employment Transition Act of 2010 (H.R. 5400)*, *the Veterans' Disability Claims Efficiency Act of 2010 (H.R. 5928)* and *the Rating and Processing Individuals' Disability (RAPID) Claims Act of 2010 (H.R. 5549)*.

"As a grateful nation, we have an obligation to our returning veterans and their families for the sacrifices they have made to keep our nation safe and secure," **said Arcuri**. "That obligation includes providing them with the care they need in an efficient and timely manner and ensuring every veteran has access to a full-four year college education and a good job so they can move towards the bright future they have earned-and deserve."

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 (H.R. 5933)

provides more resources and opportunity to veterans who were previously excluded from GI Bill benefits by expanding to include vocational schools, apprenticeships and on-the-job training and granting full GI Bill credit to National Guardsmen responding to national disasters. H.R. 5933 also expands and simplifies the Yellow Ribbon Program for veterans who choose to attend private, graduate or out-of-state schools and provides all student veterans with a 30 percent increase in the monthly living allowance.

The Veterans Employment Transition Act of 2010 (H.R. 5400) would expand and simplify the Work Opportunity Tax Credit by enabling veterans who have been out of work, but did not file for unemployment, to utilize this tax credit, as well as National Guardsmen who have responded to national disasters. Additionally, it would provide servicemen and women with information on how to market themselves to potential employers directly related to the tax credit.

The Veterans' Disability Claims Efficiency Act of 2010 (H.R. 5928) would create a fast-track system within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to quickly grant initial disability ratings to veterans with straightforward claims. This process will place raters at the beginning of the claims process to assign temporary ratings to injuries that can be adjudicated based on the initial evidence submitted by the veteran. This new component to the claims processing system would give veterans access to their benefits quickly while the VA develops the rest of their claim. Additionally, it would allow the VA to direct workflow in a more efficient way within the regional offices.

The Rating and Processing Individuals' Disability (RAPID) Claims Act of 2010 (H.R. 5549) would codify into law the VA's nationwide Fully Developed Claim program which allows a veteran to bypass the lengthy claim development period by submitting a complete claim that needs no further substantiating evidence. It also amends the program to allow veterans to notify the VA that a claim is forthcoming, which would secure an effective date of compensation well before the claim was officially filed. Under H.R. 5549, the VA would be required to automatically include an appeal form when they provide any claim decision and in the event a veteran's fully developed claim is not eligible to be processed, the VA would be required to notify the veteran what their claim is lacking for approval.

Since January 2007, Arcuri has supported legislation that has provided a 70 percent increase in funding for veterans' health care and benefits, over 10,000 new claims processors to reduce VA case backlogs, 3,389 new doctors and 14,316 new nurses, 145 new community-based vet outpatient clinics and 92 new vet centers. This includes \$1 million specifically for improvements to the Donald J. Mitchell VA Outpatient Clinic in Rome, NY.

Additionally, Arcuri has introduced legislation that would automatically enroll returning veterans into the VA health system unless they chose to opt-out and plans to introduce a bill that would provide any honorably discharged veteran with a refundable tax credit up to \$250 to join a gym or health facility.

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